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UNCLAS TAIPEI 004264

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE

STATE FOR EAP/RSP/TC, G, OES/IHA  
STATE PLEASE PASS TO AIT/W

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: TBIO AMED SENV CASC ECON TW WHO

SUBJECT: AVIAN INFLUENZA SMUGGLED INTO TAIWAN FROM CHINA

¶1. (SBU) AIT received news late on October 20 from the Taiwan Bureau of Animal and Plant Health Inspection and Quarantine under the Council of Agricultural (COA) that of the 1500 birds being smuggled from China on a Panamanian-flagged vessel that were seized by Taiwan Coast Guard on October 14, all 46 birds in the sample tested for avian flu tested positive with H5N1 avian flu virus. (COA routinely tests smuggled and imported birds for disease. This was the first time avian flu virus has been detected.) The test was done by the COA Animal Health Research Institute using the "RT-PCR" testing method. The results did not become available until late on October 20. COA has held a press conference to express gratitude to the Coast Guard for making the seizure. The Coast Guard and the Taiwan CDC together destroyed and burnt the birds on October 15, and the area was disinfected. All workers involved in the seizure and destruction of the birds are being monitored. COA will continue testing all birds imported into Taiwan. During the press conference COA urged public caution about contact with birds.

¶2. (SBU) Comment: This test result refutes China's denial of an ongoing avian flu problem. The fact that smuggling from China to Taiwan is commonplace, and usually not intercepted by the Coast Guard, means there is a chance the disease is also present in Taiwan.

PAAL